

To Members of the Planning & Development Committee and other interested parties:

As parents of former public school students and owners of a local restaurant in New Canaan, we write to you today to strongly oppose HB 7192 and/or other bills or budget attempts to redistrict or consolidate services in our school district. Further, we oppose any and all mandates by Hartford to take away our town's ability to control the educational services it provides to the community.

My husband and I moved to Connecticut almost 25 years ago, for a few reasons. First, we loved New Canaan's quaint, friendly town, its proximity to NYC and its accessibility by train. Second, we were attracted to the lower real estate taxes in 1995 and thought the idea of "consumption" taxes to be fair. **Lastly, we wanted and got a strong public school system in which to educate our children. In fact, the high quality of the school district is what continues to attract new families to New Canaan and keeps real estate values from collapsing.** Per WalletHub rankings, published in a Forbes Article in July 2018, (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/reneemorad/2018/07/31/states-with-the-best-public-school-systems/#4305033b3897>) CT was ranked #3 in Education when compared to all other states in the US.

To further this point, we believe the success of the NCPS system is largely the result of the checks and balances that our local Board of Education (BOE), town government and the parent community provide. The budget process has multiple steps and the BOE must obtain approval of its budget from both the Board of Finance and Town Council. This rigorous process, along with parental involvement is the key to the success of our district. Taking that local control of education away through consolidation or redistricting and making our BOE a separate taxing entity reporting only to Hartford will have a detrimental impact on the quality and character of our schools, limit community involvement and curtail efforts to control costs in school budgeting. This bill will silence the voices of parents and reduce their influence and engagement.

Rather than "breaking" what is working well and what has worked well historically, why not institute a study of failing schools? Shouldn't the goal here be to improve outcomes rather than just an equalization of all students? Why not hire top educational consultants to determine how you can improve quality of education in Hartford, Stamford, Bridgeport, New Haven and Waterbury among others? Perhaps you could appoint an educational commissioner to oversee failing districts for the purpose of improving quality and outcomes and hold that person accountable for putting systems in place to accomplish those goals?

Twenty-five years ago, when we moved to Connecticut we didn't worry about the financial status of the state, we didn't worry about our taxes going up, we didn't worry about our friends, neighbors and businesses leaving the state and we certainly didn't worry about the quality of our schools! Instead of partaking in a "race to the bottom," why don't we set a

shining example of how we as state can work together in a bi-partisan way to come up with “out of the box” ideas to attract creative thinkers, new businesses and revenue to our state?! We vote for that!!

We urge you to vote against this bill – HB 7192 or any similar bill, that would erode the quality of education in our local schools and negatively impact the CT economy. Our schools are a magnet for families and an important reason to move to Connecticut. If you look to reapportion funds and diminish the integrity of the New Canaan Public school system, constituents will vote with their feet, leave the state and deny you of your tax dollars.

Sincerely,

Laura & John Barker

New Canaan, CT